

OUR VIEWS

‘Sun’ Bowl experience anything but

College bowl games were invented so that fans from the frigid north could have a winter escape to palm trees, beaches, and sunny weather.

So, with visions of going off to something called the Sun Bowl, we optimistically headed out with the idea of enjoying a break from the cold snap that returned to Eastern Oregon. Fortunately, having been to the 2001 “Sun” Bowl, just for the heck of it we took along heavy winter coats, gloves, hats, long johns, and a rain parka. Every item was pressed into service during a football game that saw heavy snow falling almost from the opening kickoff.

The only thing I didn’t take was my fancy new crimson and gray rain suit which I debuted at an earlier game in Pullman and which prompted a long-time friend to ask if I was auditioning for the “Deadliest Catch.”

With good fortune, the snow started just after WSU managed to surge into a lead they never surrendered. The Cougar air raid offense is designed to work most effectively when the ball is neither slippery nor frozen. Credit goes to the kid on the sideline who tried to keep dry footballs in the hands of quarterback Luke Falk, who was later named player of the game — Falk, not the kid.

There were many highs for the determined Cougars and many of them occurred on defense rather than offense which is a relatively new phenomenon for Mike Leach’s pass-happy program. Much has already been reported about the actual mechanics of

the game since it took place several days ago but it is hard to forget the key interceptions by Ivan McLennan and Shalom Luani and the fumble recovered by Marcellus Pippins on the five-yard line during the powerful fourth quarter defensive stand since by that point in the game, the Cougar passing game was virtually snowed out.

The weather could have been different, but not in El Paso. The Cougars almost ended up in the Holiday Bowl in San Diego before organizers suddenly realized the fan base in nearby Greater Los Angeles was a hair more enticing than the fan base in distant Greater Pullman. Much the same thing happened at the Foster Farms Bowl near San Francisco when that event dipped down and chose UCLA for much the same reason — only to have their in-state choice upset by Nebraska, one of three bowl teams with a losing record. That being said, congratulations to Mike Riley, the new Nebraska coach who is one of the game’s true gentlemen.

Meanwhile, back in El Paso, the Cougars were given little chance of beating a storied Miami program. CBS, which broadcast the game, missed the first touchdown while completing a basketball game and missed more of the game while they were busy interviewing Mark Richt, the new Miami coach. Fans who saw the game on television said CBS was far more interested in Richt and Miami in general and only in the waning minutes did they remember who was actually winning the game.

Even the local daily newspaper, the *El Paso Times*, headlined their post-game story crediting the Husky defense for holding off the Hurricanes. Yes, I said Huskies. In the same

story, just under the headline, was a picture of the Miami fans celebrating a WSU field goal.

It would appear the local sports staff was stricken with the same sense of delirium that must have caused some miner, crazy with thirst on the barren West Texas plains, to invent the name “Sun Bowl” in the first place.

It had actually been our intent to see more of the El Paso area but due to the weather, the rental car we finally secured only left the underground parking garage long enough to get to the stadium and back to the airport.

Most fans, unprepared for the weather, left at the half. By the time the game ended, the stands were nearly empty. We had great seats from the start, row 8 on the 50-yard line, and by the time the game was over, we had the entire row to ourselves.

As the clock wound down, and as the Cougar team began to celebrate their phenomenal defensive stand and improbable victory, the few remaining Cougar fans fled for shelter. And by the time the Sun Bowl trophy presentation took place, the only people left were the team and coaches, who were already on the field, and a small entourage of WSU dignitaries who descended from their sky box for the ceremony.

Oh, and the two guys in the front row who went shirtless throughout the game were still on hand, despite the freezing temperatures and the snowstorm. There’s apparently no reason to leave when you probably don’t remember where you’ve been or where you are going.

As we savored the remarkable victory after finding dry clothes and the warmth of our hotel, it was amazing how quickly a good Manhattan and a Texas steak erased any discomfort we might

have experienced.

It even, finally, erased the haunting memory of that day in early September when the Cougars suffered that embarrassing loss to Portland State in a heavy rainstorm.

It was like bookends — game one, the valley that was the debacle against the Vikings and game 13, the mountaintop that was the win over one of America’s most vaunted football programs.

To go 9-4 in the Pac-12, when your team is considered one of America’s two most challenging recruiting locations, works for me.

To beat Miami 20-14 is something Cougar fans will savor for a very long time.

- And the travel?
- Leaving Pasco – delayed three hours because plane stuck in snowstorm in Denver and can’t get to Pasco to pick us up
  - Leaving Denver – delayed for de-icing and inclement weather
  - Rental Car in El Paso – cancelled because plane was late getting in
  - Leaving El Paso – delayed three hours because of congestion and weather in Houston
  - Leaving Denver –delayed 90 minutes because defroster broke on plane and new one had to be installed
  - Getting baggage in Pasco – 200 people stuffed into baggage return because several flights had arrived – all late – and skeleton crew on duty

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BEAVERS: Won rebound battle 46-33

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took a one-point lead on Brianna Turner’s free throw with 1:51 to play and the Irish twice had a chance to extend that advantage, but a steal by Hanson gave the Beavers the ball back with 32 seconds left.

Oregon State failed to get a shot to the rim on the other end and turned the ball back over to Notre Dame with 7 seconds left on a shot clock violation. Mabrey came up with a key block of Hanson in the waning seconds.

“We were trying to put (Hanson) in a position to make a play,” Rueck said. “They made a good play on her and challenged her shot.”

Jamie Weisner finished with 15 points for the Beavers, and Hamblin added 10 points and 12 rebounds.

Notre Dame used a 21-3 run between the second and third quarters and led by 13 just under 4 minutes into the third quarter, following Michaela Mabrey’s second 3-pointer of the half.

Oregon State answered with a 13-2 run to get back within two points after consecutive 3s by Hanson with 1:09 left in the third.

“We knew we were going to take a big punch from this team coming out of halftime,” Rueck said. “At that point (after the run), we felt like we had taken control of the game.”

A 14-3 burst in the fourth quarter put the Beavers ahead by three with 4:11 left.

Notre Dame finished the half with a 9-0 run, capped by Hannah Huffman’s buzzer-beating jumper to lead 30-26.

**TIP-INS**  
Oregon State: The Beavers lead the nation in defensive rebounding (35 per game) and finished with a 46-33 advantage on the boards.

NFL

Titans wait as Mariota tests injured knee

By **TERESA M. WALKER**  
*AP Pro Football Writer*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — In an odd twist, the Tennessee Titans could have a lot to lose with a victory in their season finale, and that’s not even considering Marcus Mariota’s health.

Tennessee’s rookie quarterback tested his sprained right knee Monday, and the Titans are waiting to see how Mariota feels before deciding whether to play him in their season finale at Indianapolis. A win against the Colts

could cost Tennessee the No. 1 pick overall in next year’s draft.

But the Titans say Mariota’s health is the only factor they’ll consider when determining whether he’ll play.

“If he’s not completely healthy, I mean we feel like he’s close to 100 percent, then it’s less likely he’s going to play,” interim coach Mike Mularkey said Monday. “His health is the No. 1 for us. He’s got such a



Mariota

great future ahead of him. He’s got plenty of games, lots of games to go, and we won’t expose him at all.”

But if Mariota doesn’t play, and the Tennessee loses, the Titans get the top pick in the 2016 draft.

The Titans (3-12) will have the No. 1 overall draft pick with a loss Sunday since they have a weaker opponents’ strength of schedule than the Cleveland Browns, also 3-12. Tennessee visits India-

napolis (7-8), while the Browns conclude hosting Pittsburgh (9-6).

Winning without Mariota will be a challenge. Backup Zach Mettenberger is 0-9 as a starter, and the Titans lost 34-6 to Houston in their home finale.

Mariota sprained his right knee Dec. 20 when he was sacked for the third time early in the second quarter of a 33-16 loss at New England, keeping him out of a 34-6 loss to Houston in Tennessee’s home finale. That was the third game Mariota, the No. 2 pick overall out of Oregon, has missed this season.

PREPS: Hermiston rebounds, defeats West Linn

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**LIBERTY 52, PENDLETON 45** — At Bend, the Pendleton Buckaroos kicked off the Oregon Holiday Hoopfest with a close loss to Liberty on Monday afternoon.

The Buckaroos were led offensively by Kalan McGlothlan with 10 points and 15 rebounds, but were plagued by the turnover bug against a tough Liberty defense.

“We struggled with their trap defense,” said Buckaroos coach Michelle Gomez. “We had a few stretches where we could break it ... but we finished with 22 turnovers.”

Pendleton continues Hoopfest play today against Putnam at 10:45 a.m.

**LHS (2-5) 15 9 10 18 — 52**  
**PHS (1-7) 12 10 6 17 — 45**  
LIBERTY — A. Grenfell 14, K. Pimentel 10, K. Magera 8, K. Pimentel 7, C. Smotherman 4, B. Romeo 4, A. Gallegos 4.  
PENDLETON — K. McGlothlan 10, M. Davies 9, L. Richards 9, C. Hoffman 7, H. Greb 5, R. Gentner 3, H. Porter 2.  
3-pointers — LHS 2, PHS 2. Free throws — LHS 7-14, PHS 15-26. Fouls — LHS 18, PHS 15.

**DESALES (WA) 54, WESTON-MCEWEN 39** — At Walla Walla, Wash., the Weston-McEwen TigerScots slow first half proved to be too big of a hole to dig out of, falling to DeSales on Monday night at the DeSales Tournament.

“DeSales can shoot, and today it was night and day their shooting to ours,” said TigerScots coach Amber Doremus. “Our second half was much better, the girls played with energy.”

The TigerScots trailed 27-12 at halftime and evened up with DeSales at 27-27 each in the second half to pick up the loss. Jessica Lambert led Weston-McEwen with seven points, while Sarah Finifrock, Bailey Hillmick and Maddie Muilenburg each added six points.

Weston-McEwen plays again today in tournament play in DeSales at 3 p.m. versus the winner of Kiona-Benton or

University Prep.

**W-M (3-4) 6 6 11**  
**16 — 39**  
**DHS (4-2) 12 15 13**  
**14 54**  
WESTON-MCEWEN — J. Lambert 7, S. Finifrock 6, B. Hillmick 6, M. Muilenburg 6, A. Broncheau 4, A. Schroeder 4, C. Quaempts 2, K. Vescio 2, A. Hill 2, A. Finifrock, S. von Borstel.  
DESALES — Baumgart 20, Buratto 14, Acok 7, Maiuri 6, Lyons 3, Buratto 2, Jones 2, Cortez, Haider, Kjeldgaard, Olson.  
3-pointers — W-M 2, DHS 8. Free throws — W-M 5-9, DHS 6-9. Fouls — W-M 14, DHS 13.

**CONDON/WHEELER 44, ECHO 19** — At Dufur, the Condon/Wheeler Knights kept its undefeated season going with a win over Echo at the 1A Hoops Classic on Monday afternoon.

The Knights held a 19-4 lead at halftime before putting the game away for good in the second half. Annika Rietman led the way in scoring for the Knights with 16 points on 7-9 shooting and added nine rebounds. Emma Logan chipped in 12 points and 10 rebounds.

As a team, Condon/Wheeler shot 54 percent from the field, while Echo shot a meager 10.7 percent — making just 7-65 attempts from the floor. Hannah McCarty led Echo with eight points and eight rebounds.

**C/W (1) 9 10 14 — 49**  
**EHS (1) 1 3 7 8 — 19**  
CONDON/WHEELER — A. Rietman 16, E. Logan 12, B. Dyer 6, J. Homer 6, L. Aarnodt 4, K. Reser, A. Terland, B. Jaeger, A. Ramsey, A. Carnine.  
ECHO — H. McCarty 8, E. Parks 3, K. Ranger 3, D. Tarvin 2, L. Cox 2, B. Willbrodt 1, T. Swaggart, L. Wiggins.  
3-pointers — C/W 2, EHS 0. Free throws — C/W 4-7, EHS 4-13. Fouls — C/W 15, EHS 14. Fouled out — L. Cox (EHS).

**HERMISTON 79, WEST LINN 74** — At Lake Oswego, the Hermiston Bulldogs gutted out a win over West Linn in a consolation game at the Nike Interstate Shootout on Monday.

The Bulldogs rebounded for the win after falling on Sunday to South Medford 62-56 to begin the Shootout play in the Swoosh bracket. No other details were reported.

With the win, Hermiston improves to 8-2 on the season. Hermiston will play Central

Catholic today at 10 a.m.

**UMATILLA 44, ST. MARY’S MEDFORD 19** — At Salem, the Umatilla Vikings started off the Crusader New Years Invitational on a positive note, defeating St. Mary’s, Medford 44-19.

No details were reported. Umatilla (9-2) will play again today against Salem Academy in Salem with the time TBA.

**SOUTHWEST CHRISTIAN 40, ARLINGTON 37** — At Dufur, the Arlington Honkers lost for only the third time this season on Monday with a close loss to Southwest Christian at the 1A Hoops Classic.

No details were reported.

BOYS BASKETBALL

**CONDON/WHEELER 49, ECHO 39** — At Dufur, the Condon/Wheeler Knights pulled away from the Echo Cougars in the second half to earn a 10 point victory on Monday afternoon at the 1A Hoops Classic.

“We worked well as a team and played great defense to shut (Echo) down in the second half,” said Knights coach Austin Cinnamon.

Alex Lindsay led the Knights in scoring with 17 points and 12 rebounds off the bench. Michael Thompson netted 19 points on 7-18 shooting and added a team-best 12 rebounds.

Condon/Wheeler continues tournament play today against Southwest Christian at 12:30 p.m. Echo will also play again today, with it’s opponent TBA.

**C/W (3-4) 7 7 14 21 — 49**  
**EHS (3-6) 7 8 5 19 — 39**  
CONDON/WHEELER — A. Lindsay 17, B. Harrison 9, C. Machines 8, T. Homer 6, H. Winslow 5, J. Hoover 2, J. Wright 2, Z. Rutherford, J. Cortes.  
ECHO — M. Thompson 19, C. Chavez 9, B. Gibbs 8, B. Moffit 2, T. Mulder 1, D. Craig, C. Medrano, Z. Gerke.  
3-pointers — C/W 3, EHS 2. Free throws — C/W 14-23, EHS 7-14. Fouls — C/W 16, EHS 21.

**HEPPNER 56, PEND-**

LYNCH: Return helps struggling rushing attack

Continued from 1B

loss to St. Louis.

Carroll said Lynch’s status for this week would first depend on how he managed the next couple of days of personal workouts with mixed martial arts trainers in the Bay Area that Lynch has worked with in the past, and then if he is able to immediately translate that rehabilitation work into football practice.

“We’re pretty much relying on the reports they are giving us and the work that is being done,” Carroll said. “Those guys know him really well and really for the last few years have done great work with him, and we’re trusting that they are looking seriously at the preparation level and endurance and all of those things to give us an indication we can move forward.”

Carroll’s optimistic tone about Lynch came a day after Seattle’s five-game winning streak was snapped, taking away control of the No 5 seed in the NFC playoffs. Even with a victory on Sunday in Arizona, the Seahawks could still fall to the sixth seed in the conference if Minnesota wins at Green Bay.

A loss to the Cardinals would land the Seahawks in the No. 6 spot no matter the outcome in the NFC North and ensure any postseason run by Seattle is entirely on the road.

“We’re banking on that we have built up a pretty good process in how we do it,” Carroll said. “We have the really good back to backs. We’re going to have to go back to back, maybe to back, to do something really special.”

But first the Seahawks must correct the problems that emerged in the loss to the Rams, and most of them can be attributed to struggles on the offensive line in the first half.

Quarterback Russell Wilson was under constant pressure from the Rams’ defensive front, and Seattle’s run game was nonexistent. The Seahawks had just 14 yards rushing in the first half and 60 for the game, snapping a string of 25 straight games rushing for at least 100 yards as a team.

By the time Seattle made corrections it was facing a 16-0 deficit and having to rely on the pass to rally.

“That we were so unlike what we have been,” Carroll said, “the consistency that we have come to really appreciate wasn’t there.”